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SUBJECT: JAPAN, ROK KEEN ON ASIA-PACIFIC DEMOCRACY PROJECT

#### SUMMARY

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¶1. (SBU) During the course of trilateral talks among the U.S., ROK and Japan held in Seoul on January 11, both ROKG Vice Foreign Minister Park In-kook and GOJ Deputy Vice Minister for Foreign Policy Masaharu Kono expressed preliminary interest in the idea of an Asia-Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP) and said they would welcome further discussion of the proposal. END SUMMARY.

#### ASIA-PACIFIC DEMOCRACY PROJECT

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¶2. (SBU) The APDP, an idea under consideration, would be a coalition of democratic governments partnering to promote and strengthen democratization, governance, civil society, and rule of law in the Asia-Pacific region. One possible model would be a steering group comprised of Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the U.S., with membership open to all Asian democracies committed to strengthening democratic values and institutions in the region. Possible initiatives could include activities designed to promote civil society, institutional development, free and fair elections, civilian oversight and transparency in the security sector, and other best practices of sound governance.

#### ROKG, GOJ VOICE INITIAL SUPPORT

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¶3. (SBU) After discussing his Partnership for Democratic Governance proposal, Director of Policy Planning Stephen Krasner then raised the APDP concept during U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral discussions held in Seoul January 11. Following up on S/P Krasner's comment that the major security challenges come from weak, ill-governed or repressive states, NSC Senior Director for Strategic Planning William Inboden added that more multilateral cooperation to promote and strengthen democracy in the region could be helpful. The APDP was one idea to help address that need.

¶4. (SBU) ROKG Vice Foreign Minister Park In-kook said that democracy promotion activity was welcome and should be encouraged. He observed that corruption and the lack of reliable democratic institutions, news media, and an independent judiciary should all be considered when attempting to implant democratic values in developing countries. Promising a more official response through diplomatic channels, Park said that the APDP was a good proposal to expedite democracy development in a more tangible

way.

15. (SBU) GOJ Deputy Vice Minister for Foreign Policy Masaharu Kono said that he was "overwhelmed by the wonderful idea." Noting that that the concept dovetailed with Japan's Arc of Freedom and Prosperity initiative to emphasize a value-driven foreign policy, Kono said that his government would be interested in learning more about the idea.

#### BILATERAL DISCUSSION WITH ROKG

16. (SBU) At Park's suggestion, Inboden met separately with MOFAT's Director of Human Rights and Social Affairs Kim Moon-hwa. Kim, referencing ROKG's participation in the Community of Democracies (CD), said that the ROKG was a staunch supporter of the U.S. policy of supporting democracies on a global scale. He said that the ROKG's initial assessment of the APDP was that it was meaningful and important, a "PSI for human rights," but would require more deliberation. However, given the ROK's experience with democracy, Kim anticipated that the ROKG would be pleased to be part of APDP's steering group.

17. (SBU) Kim noted with approval that the initiative contains important elements, such as an emphasis on the judiciary, institutional development, capacity building, and civilian oversight of the military. Kim suggested that additional programs targeting mass media and education could also be useful.

18. (SBU) Responding to a series of questions regarding program specifics, Inboden explained that the program was just a notional idea at this point, and that its timing, membership, and structure would all be determined by the participating nations. Member countries would have to be "action-oriented," Inboden said, and target countries would likely be countries which are trying to consolidate their democracies, such as East Timor or the Philippines. Success could lead to more ambitious projects in countries such as Burma. While APDP has not yet been funded, initial projects could consist of a consolidation of ongoing endeavors, for which funds have already been committed. Inboden said that while China would be neither a member nor a target country, he did not anticipate a hostile response to such an initiative from Beijing.

19. (SBU) Inboden further explained that APDP would not compete with CD, whose charter envisioned the development of regional projects. Depending on member country intent, APDP could be a part of CD, affiliated with it, or entirely independent. Kim said that it would be important for APDP to be consistent with CD activities.

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